



# DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

## INFORMATION SERVICE

### FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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PHOTOS available from Fish and Wildlife Service.

#### MATTAMUSKEET REFUGE PROVIDES BIRD HAVEN, SPORT FOR HUNTERS

Mattamuskeet National Wildlife Refuge, a 50,000-acre area on the coast of North Carolina and 7 miles from Pamlico Sound, is proving more popular each year both with migratory wildfowl and with migratory waterfowl hunters, officials of the Fish and Wildlife Service reported to Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes today. The wild ducks and geese have flocked there in huge numbers from their breeding grounds in the north.

The Mattamuskeet Refuge is one of the many important waterfowl areas reclaimed by the Fish and Wildlife Service as part of that conservation agency's program to restore wildlife habitats that have been taken for farming purposes. Formerly, Lake Mattamuskeet was one of the best wildfowl wintering areas along the Atlantic Coast.

About two decades ago, a commercial organization purchased the area and drained the lake for farming purposes. As a result, the wild ducks, swans, and other migratory waterfowl had to winter on other places along the coast. The farming venture failed, and the waters filled the area again.

In 1934, the Fish and Wildlife Service purchased 50,000 acres of the lake and surrounding territory and established the national wildlife refuge. In

cooperation with the North Carolina Division of Game and Inland Fisheries, about 10 percent of the area was set aside as a public hunting ground.

Now, the waterfowl benefit, the State of North Carolina benefits, and the sportsmen benefit.

By scientific planning, by planting waterfowl food plants, controlling water levels, and re-creating marshes, the Service has made Mattamuskeet a wild-life paradise again. The wildfowl are returning by the thousands.

On the 10 percent of the area where hunting is permitted, the State of North Carolina supervises 41 blinds where hunters may enjoy their outdoor sport. A State game official issues daily permits to hunters and assigns a local guide to each blind. Revenues from the permits are used by the State Division of Game and Inland Fisheries for law-enforcement work in the Mattamuskeet area.

Accommodations for hunters are available on the area at the Mattamuskeet Lodge, operated under a concession by private individuals. Revenues from the lodge are turned over to the United States Treasury, which refunds one-fourth the amount to the local county authorities. Other accommodations are available in the nearby community.

That the refuge has proved popular with sportsmen is indicated by the fact that last year some 2,500 one-day hunting permits were issued to wildfowlers who went there from 32 States. About 3 in 8 hunters are nonresidents. On an average, some 50 hunters are on the area each day during the season.

Sportsmen have long known that wild ducks and geese are wary creatures that sense when an area is hunted. But the Mattamuskeet Refuge is still popular with the birds, and during the height of the season some 75,000 of these wildfowl have been counted on the area. About 10 percent of the birds are taken by the wildfowlers.

Establishment of the wildlife refuge has also had a beneficial effect on game-law violations in that section of North Carolina, officials said. At one time, the Mattamuskeet region was reputed to be an area where game laws were little observed, enforced, and recognized.

This year, U. S. game management agents of the Service reported that there have been fewer prosecutions for violations on the area than ever before since the refuge was established. The decline in violations is explained, they said, by increasing cooperation from sportsmen and local inhabitants, and continued cooperation from the refuge personnel and the State Division of Game and Inland Fisheries. The favorable attitude towards wildlife regulations has also extended itself into other sections of North Carolina, officials said.